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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S NEW SPEAKER: PLEASE, NO ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTION, AND ARTICLE 301 NEEDS AMENDMENT

¶1. (SBU) During Ambassador's October 4 courtesy call, Koksal Toptan, the new speaker of Turkey's parliament, stressed his commitment to US-Turkey ties. Turkey was working well with the US on Iraq, including through the Neighbors process, and was strongly committed to Iraq's territorial and political unity. A divided Iraq would only lead to greater instability and increase Iran's influence in the region. Toptan expressed appreciation for continued strong US support for Turkey's EU accession process, cooperation on energy issues, and joint efforts to interdict trafficking in persons, drugs and weapons.

¶2. (SBU) Toptan's concerns mirrored those of other Turks: US failure to take visible action against the PKK was hard to understand, especially as the US was so active in the global war on terror. His focus, though, was on possible passage of a congressional Armenian genocide resolution (AGR). Toptan recognized and expressed appreciation for ongoing USG efforts to prevent AGR passage, but hoped the Administration would do even more. To that end, a Turkish parliamentary delegation was headed to Washington this weekend. He had also written to Speaker Pelosi, urging against passage and inviting her to visit Turkey. Toptan highlighted Turkish sensitivities on this topic, stressed that Turkey wants improved relations with Armenia, which could be set back years, and lamented the effect passage would have on US-Turkish relations. Ambassador asked for Toptan's help in continuing to move our relations forward, even if an AGR passes; we have many common strategic interests in the region, he stressed, that cannot be put on hold.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador also raised domestic reforms. The US would continue to support Turkey's EU accession. Parliament has a full agenda. International interest is high, however, in freedom of expression-related reforms, such as amending or eliminating the controversial Article 301 of the Penal Code. This would be good for Turkey, good for Turkey's EU accession process, and be seen positively in the US as well. Toptan indicated that there was, in fact, a problem with Article 301. It had been consulted with EU experts and a number of European countries had similar provisions. The problem in Turkey was primarily how prosecutors implement the law. The GOT recognized this and would, he believed, move soon to resolve the implementation problem.

¶4. (SBU) Toptan, the former chair of parliament's Justice Committee, responded positively to the Ambassador's pitch that parliament prioritize passage of the implementing legislation for the Hague Convention on International Child Abductions. Toptan acknowledged that he had had a keen interest in it as Committee chair, and pledged to continue to do his best to ensure early passage.

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